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Animal advocacy and human behavioural change

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Introduction

If you hear the words “animal welfare campaign”, what do you think of? A common answer is hard-hitting animal rights posters, for example comparing the animals we eat to the animals we keep as pets. This type of imagery is designed to shock its recipients into rethinking their behaviour and making behavioural changes and is often remembered because of its shock factor. However, these tactics are just one type of campaign. No matter where you live in the world, and no matter your culture or your personal opinions, you’ve probably come across more attempts to influence your behaviour than you realise in relation to animal welfare. Campaigns are in our supermarkets, our advertising, our legislation, on our television streaming channels, and in our veterinary surgeries. They shape the way we think and how we behave in the world in relation to animals – and given how animals permeate our culture, that means how we behave in a broad sense. Animal welfare is embedded in the choices we make around what we eat, how we farm, medications we consume, our conservation programmes, our choice of pets; and yet, methods of bringing about change remain largely unknown, even though there is still a lot to improve in the field of animal welfare.

Campaigning is important in animal welfare because we cannot improve the lives of animals without first changing human behaviour, given that humans are often the cause of animal suffering. Which humans do we want to change? That’s trickier. Every animal issue is unique; the subjects might be the consumers of an animal product, or consumers of animal entertainment or tourism; perhaps they are farmers, perhaps pet owners, or policy makers. Who they are will impact the type of campaigns that are likely to be effective in creating change, as will other important factors such as their cultures, beliefs, and the environment or context. Campaigning successfully involves a thorough understanding of those factors, to enable change.

This chapter will explore the different approaches to animal welfare campaigns; starting with why campaigning is necessary, before moving on to consider what we can learn from historical welfare campaigns and from the application of human behaviour change science. Finally, we will explore different approaches to advocacy campaigning, including legislation and policy change, awareness campaigns, motivation campaigns, and environmental change campaigns.
Background

Attitudes and behaviour towards animals vary dramatically across the globe according to country and culture, leading to wide disparities in levels of welfare. Animal welfare campaigns exist because of a perceived imbalance between one group and another in the way animals are treated or used. Those groups could be communities, cultures, religions, or countries, but the important thing in campaigning is that one side believes that the other side needs to change their practices.

The pervading research and frameworks around assessing animal welfare are a product of Western cultures, where views on welfare have been heavily influenced by a culture of reliance on scientific study. In Western cultures, views of animals as emotionless “machines” or “automata” promoted by leading philosophers such as Descartes, Aristotle, and Kant, as well as the pervading Christian beliefs at the time, began to change during the Enlightenment (Duncan 2019). At this point, the culmination of extensive wars in Europe led philosophers to consider ethics and morality in new ways, and the concept of “scientific study” was born. This reconceptualisation of life and the study of life led to changes in the way animals were considered. While animals were (and are still) considered primarily from a utilitarian perspective, increasingly, researchers and philosophers considered animals to be emotional, sentient beings, and texts such as Ruth Harrison’s *Animal Machines* (1964), Singer’s *Animal Liberation* (1975), and Griffin’s *The Question of Animal Awareness* (1976) shaped later thinking.

The reliance on scientific study as a basis for policy has permeated Western cultures, and the sciences of veterinary studies, animal welfare, and anthrozoology (the combination of anthropology and zoology; the ways in which cultures think and behave towards animals) are legitimised fields of study. Western views around the role of animals are also driven by beliefs and our feelings about the way it is acceptable or ethical to treat other beings (Munro, 2012; Bryant and Sullivan, 2019). It is important to note that Western countries are no panacea for animal welfare, and many issues persist in relation to farming, animal entertainment, and companion animal care. For example, Western cultures are likely to keep pets as part of an “animal family”, which can itself lead to serious welfare concerns, such as obesity (Bradshaw and Casey, 2007).

Other cultures approach animal well-being differently, influenced by history, religion, and practice. For example, India has an extensive set of animal laws covering animals at slaughter, in experiments, and in entertainment, and law suggests “It shall be the duty of every citizen of India … to have compassion for living creatures”. This is likely a product of India’s Jain, Hindu, and Buddhist religions, in which concern for all life is imperative, partly due to beliefs in animal reincarnation and Gods appearing in animal form. Nevertheless, issues remain, for example in slaughter practices, ritual slaughter, and methods of reducing animals considered to be pests, such as feral dogs and monkeys.

In contrast, the approaches shown across Africa towards animal welfare are intertwined with its complex historical and cultural context and result in a wide variation of practices across African countries, religions, and tribes. Many African countries make little reference to animal welfare in their legal frameworks, though some (e.g., Tanzania) legislate for the prevention of cruelty. However, in many African tribes and communities, animals are perceived as totems or spirit guides and cannot be eaten, although those cultures may still practise animal sacrifice. For example, the Shona culture of Zimbabwe recognises the relationship between humans and animals and as a result hunting is regulated by Shona custodians. However, in other African spaces and cultures, human–animal relationships are bound by racial and economic tensions. For example, apartheid, colonialism, and proselytism left South Africa with embedded hierarchical beliefs that led to the oppression of black South African people, and subsequently the abuse and oppression of animals (Pickover, 2005). In other African cultures,
the welfare of animals is closely linked to the welfare and wealth of their owners; lack of food and medical care in humans leads to an inability to maintain animal welfare. Notably, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe have made significant progress in animal welfare through increased awareness, education, and legislation.

An entirely different situation is seen in China; despite its Taoist and Buddhist roots and the fact it is the largest animal farming nation in the world, China has very few laws relating to animal welfare. China’s animal welfare has been described as: “animal suffering is unprecedented in China in magnitude in both numerical terms … and in welfare conditions” (Li, 2012). China’s collectivist culture may be a factor, with the needs and goals of the group being given priority over those of the individual, whether that be human or other species, together with other factors such as economic and social productivity (Lu et al., 2013; You et al., 2014). The concept of “welfare” is not translatable in China, and the idea of animal welfare and animal rights was only introduced in the 1990s, following translations of texts such as Animal Liberation. Nevertheless, we should not forget China has a rich and long past which should be explored regarding human–animal relationships and is now gradually responding to changing global social license around animal use.

Central and South American culture presents a different picture again, with its ancient cultures holding animals in high regard, and efforts to institutionalise animal welfare present from the 19th century on the grounds of hygiene, as well as the effect of animal cruelty on humanity. Argentina has the longest standing history of animal welfare movements, with two of its well-known presidents playing key roles. However, as with other countries, issues with animal welfare are closely linked to the welfare of people, and hence disparities in income play a major role (Coleman and Hemsworth, 2014). Countries within Central and South America that have made moves towards improving welfare have primarily made changes within the areas of transport and slaughter, possibly due to the economic benefits of making those changes.

While this short narrative cannot even begin to do justice to the rich and varied cultural histories of those countries and continents described, even from this initial view it is evident that the colonialist view of animal welfare promoted by Western cultures may sometimes overlook the subtleties and complexities between human and animal welfare that can be present in other cultures, and particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Horta Duarte, 2013; Funes Monzote, 2013). An approach that simply imposes Westernised views of an issue onto other cultures will have limited impact because of the context in which animal welfare happens. As a result, it is vitally important that each animal welfare issue is explored with reference to its political, sociological, and cultural background.

Lessons from historical welfare campaigns

Traditionally, animal welfare campaigns have been a result of one group of people disliking the practices of another, and the campaigning group seeking to incite change – often by shocking the second group about their behaviour; the examples of blood-dripping imagery within animal rights advertisements are typical of such interventions.

These ideas follow a neoliberalist discourse, which has been also prevalent in public health narratives and campaigns. These discourses place behaviour in the hands of the individual consumer, who is judged to be making decisions considered by the campaigner to be inadvisable. The campaign therefore aims to correct this choice by presenting the subject with a shocking truth, with the assumption that change will follow. Examples of this in public health include the images present on many cigarette packets and anti-smoking campaigns, depicting cancerous lungs.
This approach can bring about change, or change attitudes towards a behaviour, but there are limitations to its application. It overlooks the complex interplay between individual human behaviours and the factors which impact them (our physical and social environment, our habits, emotions), as well as ignoring the drivers of behaviour at a cultural, political, socioeconomic, and societal level.

Consider a typical Western vegetarian campaign that juxtaposes a pet dog and a cow, suggesting that it is morally wrong to eat either (n.b., this approach could be aimed only at Western cultures, where dogs are considered “pets” but cows are commonly considered “food”; it would not work in a culture that eats dogs, or one that reveres cows). This campaign aims to make the subject feel uncomfortable about their eating behaviour, and to re-align their beliefs around which animals are food. Although this may sometimes be impactful, this approach overlooks the fact that eating habits are heavily embedded in our habits, society, and cultures. Many of us will have had the experience of learning something about a food type and thinking “I’ll never eat that again”. Even with the best of intentions, before long the strong drivers of habit, social practice, and availability override the uncomfortable feelings.

Moreover, shock approaches ignore the knotty issue that almost all consumerism is built upon cognitive dissonance at some level. Cognitive dissonance is a lack of alignment between beliefs and behaviour, meaning that we may believe one thing yet behave in a way which is incongruent with that belief (Kroesen et al., 2017). A devoted meat-eater might draw the line at eating a dog or an insect, but not be able to explain where or why the moral distinction exists between one type of animal or another, and a committed vegan may still own a pet dog or eat products containing palm-oil. This dissonance transcends animal welfare; public health discourses suffer from the same issue. In 2021, it’s very unlikely that anybody smokes because they think it is a healthy thing to do or are unaware of the potential health impacts. Instead, people smoke because it’s a social behaviour, because they think it is enjoyable, stress-relieving, and a habit as well as an addiction. The world is a complex place, and each of us has personal “lines in the sand” about what we consider to be morally acceptable or attractive behaviours. While the line might move over time, each of us is adept at holding multiple moral views at one time, and being confronted with our entangled moral compasses may not necessarily be enough to change that.

Another traditional approach to improving welfare focuses on legislation around an issue, with the assumption that laws will alter behaviour. Legislation can be extremely helpful in altering behaviour, but, just like the shock campaigns, legislative change needs careful consideration before application because of the messy reality of human lives. For example, many countries have banned the hunting and eating of wildlife for conservation reasons and to avoid potential disease outbreaks such as Coronavirus and Ebola, which are both thought to derive from the eating of wildlife (Ebola Leroy et al., 2009; Corona; Rothan and Byrareddy, 2020). However, eating wildlife is not a choice but a necessity for low-income communities who live near to those habitats, and have had their livelihoods altered by recession or climate change, causing them to hunt wildlife to eat (Brashares et al., 2011). Legislating against hunting wildlife is not, on its own, an appropriate response to targeting this issue for communities like these; alternative livelihoods or sustainable food sources would need to be incorporated into any behaviour change intervention.

A similar example of the complexity of legislative change is the Netherlands’ 2014 decision to ban the breeding of brachycephalic (short-nosed) dogs, by making it illegal to breed from a dog whose snout is less than one-third of the length of the dog’s entire head. This is a risky legislative approach, given that it is very difficult to apply this law in practice – the application of dog-head measurements is not always straightforward, and is not one person or organisation’s
responsibility. Further, many European countries with thriving consumer demand for specific dog breeds have concerns regarding puppy smuggling from countries with less stringent animal welfare standards; the Netherlands may simply end up with puppies being brought in from other countries. However, if the legislation were supported with appropriate monitoring, awareness campaigns, and a broader application of the principles of behaviour change science, this legislation could be used to instigate a positive change to puppy breeding in the Netherlands.

The examples above highlight that no behaviour (or welfare issue) happens in isolation or in a vacuum; instead, they must be explored within their context, and within the systems which are shaped by cultural, political, and social practices. The science of behaviour change has developed over the past decades alongside our improved understanding of human psychology, public health, and consumer behaviour, among other fields. Collectively, these fields suggest that a holistic understanding of the issue itself, the reasons the behaviour happens in the first place, alternatives to the behaviour, and the systems in place around the stakeholders involved in the behaviour, must all be considered before planning interventions. Once the behaviour is fully understood in all its complexity, the manner for bringing about change can be explored.

**Application of behaviour change science**

“Effective altruism” and, in our field, “effective animal advocacy” describe the application of an evidence base to campaigning or charitable activities that are aimed at benefiting a specific group (most often animals, in the world of animal welfare, but sometimes the human animal too). Historically, campaigns have simply been run in response to issues perceived by the campaigning person or group. In recent years, it is more usual for those running campaigns to think more strategically; which campaigns are going to generate the most impact? What is the “most impact” – is it the highest number of animals impacted, or a reduction in issues with the most suffering? Quantitatively speaking, the amount of funding and awareness over the welfare of 2,300 captive cetaceans, or even of the 10,000 bears in bile-farming, makes little sense in comparison with the paltry volume of campaigns for improving the welfare of the 25.9 billion chickens living on any given day (Statista, 2021).

Effective animal advocacy as a concept also supports the idea that campaigners should think in terms of the systems within which animal welfare exists; as we have seen, human behaviour is impacted by numerous internal and external drivers. A good example of this is described by Garcés, whose work in the US broiler chicken industry uncovered the complexity of systems surrounding chicken farms (as described in her 2019 book, *Grilled*). Garcés broached her concerns about the well-being of broiler chickens in commercial units with the farmers in charge of those chickens, assuming that she needed to change the farmers’ attitudes to the well-being of their birds; with this assumption, the target of any campaign aiming to improve chicken welfare would be the farmers. Garcés discovered that the farmers’ behaviour was driven by an insidious cycle of investment and debt from commercial broiler companies who employed the farmers, and from whom farmers could not hope to escape. The issue of broiler welfare was as much an issue of farmer welfare as chicken welfare; the subject of Garcés’ campaign for change needed to focus much more broadly than encouraging farmers to change their behaviour.

Before a campaign is initiated it is important to understand the interlinked aspects of its aim and how success will be measured. If the aim is to change behaviour, the intervention may be quite different to a campaign seeking to raise awareness, or a campaign aiming to change how people think about an issue. Similarly, “success” will look different; an awareness campaign might measure success by surveying a group to determine how much they know about a particular issue before and after a campaign; a behaviour change campaign would need to observe how
behaviour has altered in real life, and whether that behavioural change has resulted in meaningful change for the animal.

A thorough understanding of the issue in question should therefore help to clarify whether the potential change should be in policy, including legislation; altering the environment in which the behaviour occurs; increasing awareness or education; or increasing motivation or social responsibility around an issue. No single approach will work for every issue or in every situation; each animal welfare campaign needs to be considered individually. The remainder of this chapter will consider each of those types of change in turn.

Campaigning strategies

Policy and legislation

Although we have already discussed legislation in this chapter; here we consider it in its broader context, including how legislative rules link to the wider animal welfare policy environment. For legislation to result in impactful change, it is important that it is created with careful thought and monitoring around how people behave in the real world. Legislation that alters a frequent, popular, or well-endorsed behaviour may simply drive that behaviour “underground”, meaning that it is even less visible and has potentially even more serious welfare impacts. Legislative change needs to be carefully timed, and often benefits from being supported by other behaviour change strategies.

An example of a legislative change that needs to be supported in practice is China’s removal of dogs from its list of permitted livestock animals. The timing of this change follows decades of campaigning from animal welfare groups both within and outside China, meaning that public awareness of the ethical and welfare issues of the dog meat trade are likely to be relatively high. This is good timing in that the legislative change is likely to receive more support now than it might have done a few years ago. However, given that dog meat is still available, the legislative change may need to be supported, for example through endorsement of alternatives to dog meat.

Changes to guidelines and codes of practice can be impactful when sensitively applied. These are less stringent than laws and allow for flexible interpretation. Here, a useful example is seen in the world of antimicrobial use. It is important for human and animal health alike that antimicrobial use is limited because of an increase in resistance to antimicrobials; as a result, a global policy on antimicrobial use was agreed in 2015, which has five key objectives aimed at reducing the need for and use of antimicrobials in both human and animal medicine (World Health Organization WHO, 2015). This policy is then adapted for use in each country and setting, which brings the benefit of flexibility, but the drawback that rigour and consistency might be lost (Rogers Van Katwyk et al., 2019), as well as the fact that individual users can simply ignore the guidance if they wish. Therefore, any formal guidance, policy, or legislative change needs to be appropriately timed and supported with additional interventions to support real-world change.

A further issue with both legislation and policy is the language used in those documents, and subsequent interpretation of them. For example, “animal cruelty” is legislated against in many countries. However, it is quite clear that what constitutes “cruelty” is constructed and quantified differently according to individual, social, and cultural practices; the matter is further muddied when translation is required across languages. Legislation, guidance, and policies need to be carefully and rigorously written in order to overcome this issue.

Awareness and education

Earlier in this chapter we discussed shock campaigns, which are designed to trigger an emotional reaction, usually a negative reaction. Other options for awareness campaigns include
providing information and education around an issue. Importantly, awareness campaigns are just that: they increase awareness, which does not necessarily correlate to a change in behaviour (although it sometimes can). The gap between awareness, intention to change, and actual behaviour change has been well-studied (the effect is labelled the “intention–behaviour gap” (Sheeran and Webb, 2016); for example a campaign aiming to reduce the use of critically endangered Saiga antelope’s horn in Singapore found that its messaging was effective in changing attitudes towards the product, but that this did not necessarily translate into altered buying behaviour (Doughy et al., 2021). The fact that this intention–action gap exists does not mean that awareness campaigns aren’t important, because they absolutely are – it’s just that their limitations need to be considered so that they can be adequately supported, where necessary, with additional interventions that help to bridge the gap between awareness and behaviour.

Awareness and educational campaigns are useful tools when something about the issue is little known, and the alternative behaviour can be easily achieved or supported through other interventions (e.g., by fostering a sense of social responsibility around the alternative behaviour). For instance, shark fin soup is a delicacy in many countries, but it is problematic in terms of welfare (sharks have their fins removed, and are then thrown back into the ocean and do not survive) and sustainability. According to WildAid, a charity working on this issue, when they began their work to reduce the demand for shark fin soup, awareness of the issues was very low and people believed that shark fins could grow back once removed. Following decades of awareness campaigns, including celebrity endorsement of the campaign, the demand for shark fin soup has dropped dramatically in China, with studies showing a high awareness for the campaigns themselves and a desire to protect sharks. Here, the awareness campaign was a useful tool because people were unaware of the issues, and extensive awareness and education (including the powerful social driver of role modelling from the celebrities), and a sense of fostering sustainability resulted from choosing not to eat the soup. Unfortunately, the demand for shark fin soup has increased in other countries, showing the need to consider changes at a holistic or global level when appropriate (Wildaid, 2018).

Documentaries are another example of awareness and educational campaigns. Insightful and inspiring documentaries around important animal welfare issues include Pedigree Dogs Exposed, Blackfish, The Cove, Seaspiracy, and Blue Planet to name but a few. Documentaries raise our awareness of an issue in a way that engages more deeply with our emotions than an advert could. They achieve this through the use of salient narratives and stories, which are powerful methods of sharing information (Boissat et al., 2021).

Educational campaigns can be more targeted to specific skills and/or specific communities, rather than the broad population-level campaigns described above. A good example of targeted in-depth educational campaigns is the work of charities to improve the lives of equids working in brick kilns. Equids may spend many hours each day pulling heavily laden carts of bricks in the heat, often with little health care, nutrition, or farriery. This is not due to intentional neglect; horse, mule, and donkey owners’ income is directly related to their animal’s ability, so it is in their interest to maintain their animal’s health (Mitra and Valette, 2017). Interventions focused on increasing knowledge about the needs of those animals, and their ability to feel pain (Mitra and Valette, 2017) and providing training to the equid owners in skills such as harness care (to avoid sores), pain recognition, and nutrition. Welfare charities also train veterinary staff and farriers to provide support to the owners. In this setting, an educational and skills-based approach was most appropriate and has led to marked improvements in the welfare of brick kiln equids (Haddy et al., 2021; Mitra and Valette, 2017).
Motivation and social responsibility

Humans are a sociable species, and as such our desire to be seen to be acting in a morally respectable way is strongly embedded. As a result, social movements are a powerful driver of behaviour change because they encourage us to conform to a respected norm. The public health world has seen a move towards social movements for behaviour change; behaviours from stopping smoking to taking up exercise are often now encouraged in a visible, social form, including social media pledges and sharing of results.

Interventions that use our social nature to encourage behaviour change usually present us with opportunities to “badge” ourselves as socially responsible or moral agents and join with like-minded people. This approach is therefore useful in the animal welfare world, given that people can be extremely passionate about their animal welfare beliefs.

An example is Veganuary, a non-profit organisation that encourages people to try being vegan during the month of January each year, and to share their experiences on social media with the hashtag #Veganuary. Veganuary’s main messaging is not about the benefits of being vegan, but instead simply reads: “join the new year’s revolution”, and shares figures about the number of people and places involved (Veganuary, 2021). Further, Veganuary has aligned with the manufacturers of vegan products and restaurants to launch new vegan foods and menu options in January, which not only fosters the feeling of an exciting “revolution” in eating habits but also ensures that its followers can more easily engage in vegan lifestyles. When signing up (which is encouraged through highlighting the existence of the social movement), potential joiners can choose whether the marketing and newsletters aimed at them are primarily in relation to veganism’s role in improving animal welfare, sustainability, or health. This clever feature ensures that the triad of reasons people usually give for becoming vegan are front and centre of its campaign, but without actually telling people that there are three good reasons for becoming vegan; plus, of course, it allows potential joiners to engage in the information most relevant and salient to them.

Social movements are also important in the consumer industries including fashion and tourism, where we display ourselves through the choices we make (e.g., by choosing anti-fur, non-leather, and responsible tourism). This is also impactful on a larger scale; corporations use the examples of their own social responsibility to appeal to their customer base, which can in turn help to raise awareness of issues and shape products available to consumers. For example, the holiday company Virgin has stopped promoting or selling tickets to captive cetacean parks, is an “elephant-friendly” travel company (i.e., not encouraging elephant tourism, which has a host of concerning ethical practices) (World Animal Protection, 2019), and says it is committed to responsible whale-watching guidance (Virgin Holidays, 2019). Several large clothing and fashion manufacturers have signed up to a commitment to avoid fur, and wool which has been created from flocks where mulesing is practised (mulesing involves the removal of skin from the tail area of the sheep, with the aim of reducing fly strike) (Four Paws, 2021). The attention of these companies on each issue raises awareness with the public and also increases the perceived social responsibility of the company and those who consume its products.

Social responsibility is powerful in more targeted settings, and there are numerous examples of local communities inciting change through their passion for a certain local issue. The aforementioned Shona tribe’s monitoring of hunting according to their religious beliefs about animals is a good example. Another example is shown by the organisation Paso Pacifico, who conducted extensive community engagement and research before working with communities in Nicaragua to develop a collaborative sea-turtle conservation approach, which was sensitive to community needs, as well as to the turtles (Smith and Otterstrom, 2009). Given that their research had shown that the local community was passionate about the local turtle communities
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and concerned about poaching and the impact of tourism, Paso Pacifico’s approach was to find ways to facilitate the community’s own sense of responsibility to the turtles.

Altering the environment

Although we don’t always realise the extent of it, our environments are carefully structured to encourage us to behave in certain ways. For example, the physical structuring of supermarkets is a major field of study; we are influenced by product placement, colour, size, music, lighting, smell, and even the direction we turn when we enter a shop (Brinkworth, 2017).

Environmental changes are often referred to as “nudges” following a seminal text of the same name (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) about the strong evidence base for environmental changes influencing behaviour. The potential of these sorts of interventions is exciting and can sometimes be useful in place of, or alongside, other types of campaigns. A simple way of thinking about this is considering how the environment could make the undesirable behaviour more difficult (add friction) or the desired behaviour easier to perform (add fuel) (Ariely, 2008). One example of this is the global move towards either charging people an additional fee for single-use plastics, or simply banning them outright (as has happened in Kenya (Bahuria, 2021); both approaches make it more difficult for people to use these plastics, and in this instance the “friction” approach is likely to be more impactful at a large scale than incentivising the use of re-usable products (e.g., by giving a reduced cost to people who bring their own straws and bags).

There are numerous examples of friction-based environmental change in the trade of animals, including exotic pets and puppies. Although legislative changes have had some impact, manipulations to the environment may contribute to an increased effect: for example, disallowing advertisements on sites where people frequently impulse-buy animals (e.g., Facebook) so that people have to actively look for new pets on specific sites, rather than simply seeing them on sites they already visit (Facebook, 2019). The need for a license before owning a certain species of animal is an additional level of friction.

Fuel-based interventions (e.g. the incentivisation of certain behaviours) can be just as impactful. For example, reducing the cost of neutering, or rewarding those with animals in optimum condition. Other examples are more complex: for example, in the illegal wildlife trade, encouraging the uptake by consumers of legal alternatives to popular illegal wildlife (e.g., legally harvested songbirds versus the catching of rare, illegal wild songbirds) can lead to a move away from catching illegal wildlife (Wallen and Daut, 2018). In this instance, an approach that simply hampers the catching or trade in illegal animals may be problematic for local communities relying on the current trade to survive and will therefore seek ways around any new “friction”-based interventions but using “fuel” to facilitate a more desired behaviour may yield better results.

Discussion

There are many ways to influence human behaviour around animal welfare, and no single method or approach is applicable to every welfare issue, nor can one approach be applied to every setting. Furthermore, no matter how experienced the campaigns team, no approach is likely to be successful unless it follows research that aims to understand the issue in-depth and from multiple viewpoints. Activities such as stakeholder mapping, theories of change, and systems identification are more likely to lead to a campaign that will yield success than any other factor, because those approaches will help to understand the drivers for the issue, and the means for change. The benefit of these approaches is that they can also facilitate the development of
participatory or community-led initiatives, which are often impactful because they are responsive to local needs.

Most campaigns bring together aspects of different types of approaches, for example combining awareness and social responsibility, or legislative change with environmental restructuring. Given that we as individuals all respond differently to the materials and tactics employed in campaigning, there is certainly a place for all these diverse approaches, sensitively applied.

An example of a successful welfare campaign that brought together diverse behaviour change techniques is the campaign for improving conditions for equines travelling for slaughter in Europe. Historically, horses were regularly transported long distances into and across Europe for slaughter; suffering cramped travelling conditions and extreme hot and cold for many days with little regulation about the need for stops, water, or food provision (World Horse Welfare, 2011; Leadon, 2012). This was a politically difficult campaign given that no single organisation or governing body was responsible for these journeys, particularly given that they could begin or end anywhere across numerous countries.

World Horse Welfare (the organisation leading this campaign, which they had been active on since being founded in 1927) joined forces with charities and other interested parties (e.g., veterinarians, enforcement authorities) across Europe to act. This involved scoping out the issue; gaining a full understanding of the extent of the problem, the stakeholders involved (everyone from drivers to politicians), and possible practical solutions. The result of this process was a clear aim – a set of policy, including legislative, changes that would improve the welfare provisions of the equids during those journeys, and would contribute to the reduction in the number of live horses and donkeys being transported long distances to slaughter in Europe. With this aim in mind, a strategic campaigning plan was created to tackle the problem:

- Developing a dossier of evidence based upon field, scientific, and desk-based research that detailed the equine welfare issues and the means to address these;
- Liaising with European policy makers (e.g., European Commission), providing them with evidence of the issues and the potential solutions to improve legislation;
- Working with individual Member State country policy makers, local authorities, NGOs and the public to raise awareness of the issue, and work out how practical in-country changes could work;
- Engaging the support of the public and elected members of parliament in different Member State countries to apply pressure on policy makers for change;
- Awareness campaigns so that the public could put pressure on elected members of parliament (this included articles in the media, petitions, and talks).

A legislative change was agreed in 2004, which introduced criteria on fitness for transport of animals with specific requirements for equines, the introduction of individual partitions for animals travelling long distances (with the exception of mares travelling with foals), restriction on the movement of unbroken equines, and prevention of the use of multi-decked vehicles for the movement of horses (EC 2004). At this point the campaign did not stop; work continued pressing for finite journey limits and increased space allowance, but the focus also shifted to supporting and training the drivers, vets, and local authorities who would now need to change their practice, as well as monitoring to ensure that the legislative change was resulting in actual change (including the legislation being enforced in different countries). This example shows the need for tackling any issue with a strong evidence base around the issue, a clear aim, a strategy (which in this case necessitated the use of multiple campaigning angles), and following up with support for those carrying out the change, as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

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Conclusions

Animal advocacy has evolved since its origins and continues to evolve. In recent years, the increasing emphasis placed on strategy and evaluation of campaigns, together with an increased understanding of human behaviour change science, means that this is an especially interesting time in the development of the movement.

Human societies are becoming increasingly adept at changing the behaviour of individuals and groups of people – consider the tactics used by social media, website algorithms, supermarket design, and even the tactics used by political parties to gain votes, to see the breadth of scope for the behaviour change sciences. Although behaviour change science is often a tool used in globalisation, capitalism, and industrialisation (areas which drive the use and exploitation of animals), the world of animal welfare is catching up on harnessing these methods and using them to improve the lives of animals ranging from wildlife to pets.

The move to globalisation is also increasing our understanding and appreciation of the way that groups, cultures, religions, and countries interact with one another; we have a growing understanding of -isms (e.g., racism, sexism, speciesism). This is furthering our understanding of ethics and morality in relation to global issues and animal use. These apparently opposing forces have come together at a crucial time, as current threats to sustainability could have wide-reaching effects on our civilisation as a whole. Understanding drivers for the many groups involved in the systems surrounding animals, will help the animal welfare movement to hopefully tip the balance towards protecting animals, the environments they live in, and ultimately secure our future.

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References


